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Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The President: This morning the Assembly will first hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, His Majesty King Mswati III, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati III: I bring with me from the Kingdom of Swaziland the warm greetings and best wishes of Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and the whole Swazi nation, to our friends and fellow Member States here at the United Nations.

On behalf of the Kingdom of Swaziland, may I congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are confident that the wisdom, experience and diplomatic skills that you bring to the office will ensure success in the many issues facing this session.

Swaziland would also like to commend the work of your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who presided with such skill over the deliberations of the fifty-first session.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would like to place on record its deep appreciation for the work of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali during his tenure as our Secretary-General. Much was achieved during the five years of Mr. Boutros-Ghali's leadership, and the whole world owes him a huge debt of gratitude.

We would like further to welcome our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has shown in his first year that he has the vision and qualities effectively to lead our Organization into the twenty-first century. All of us in Africa are proud of what he has achieved in such a short time.

One of the main challenges facing our Secretary-General is the reform of the United Nations into a cost-effective, accountable, credible, well-managed and fully representative Organization.

Swaziland gave its full support to the initial Track 1 proposals put forward by the Secretary-General. In particular, we supported the various initiatives designed to reduce administrative costs in favour of increased efficiency in the development programmes in the field. We trust that the welfare of those affected by the necessary cuts has been carefully considered.

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We have also welcomed the Track 2 reforms, announced in July, and again, we support the Secretary-General's proposals on economic and social reform, development cooperation, humanitarian relief and human rights.

We believe that the Secretary-General's address at the first meeting of the general debate struck exactly the right note of wise optimism. The responsibility now lies with the General Assembly to support the Secretary-General's bold approach, and the Kingdom of Swaziland urges its fellow Member States to back the proposals and allow the reforms to forge ahead.

One area of reform that will have a major impact on the openness and accountability of the United Nations decision-making process is the question of the membership and expansion of the Security Council, in particular the need for greater representation of the developing world among the permanent members.

The Kingdom of Swaziland fully supports the updated African Common Position, which calls for, among other things, membership in the Security Council to be based on an equal geographical formula, on a regional or continental basis. This would make the Council more democratic and ensure that all Members would feel fairly and equally represented in our Organization's most influential body.

Africa believes that the continent should have at least two permanent seats, with full voting and veto rights, to represent the views and concerns of the other 51 countries. These two permanent seats would be appointed through the mechanism designed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), following the established traditional practice in force.

At the heart of the debate on overall United Nations reform is the question of finances. Most of the reforms initiated by the Secretary-General are aimed at making the Organization more cost-efficient and accountable and at allowing more of our finances to be available for the programmes in the field. This is a timely and necessary initiative and is deserving of the strongest support of all Member States.

These reforms also justify the recommitment of all Member States to keep up to date with their dues. The Kingdom of Swaziland has consistently tried to maintain a good record in fulfilling its financial obligations to the United Nations. We pledge to do our best to continue to keep up to date, and we would urge all our fellow Member States to show similar confidence in, and support for, our Organization.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would also like to add its voice to the appreciation expressed to Mr. Ted Turner for his extraordinary display of confidence in our Organization. His act of generosity, from the private sector, reflects a new spirit of optimism in the United Nations, and we would call on others with the resources to do so to follow Mr. Turner's example.

Hopes for future global stability have been raised by the various initiatives for reducing the numbers and spread of nuclear weapons and warheads.

The Kingdom of Swaziland in particular commends the commitment of the United States of America and of Russia to the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) programmes, whose implementation will contribute significantly to a more peaceful world for future generations.

We are also encouraged by the global support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and for the Chemical Weapons Convention, both of which have been signed by the Kingdom of Eswatini.

All these initiatives are important indications of the real commitment of almost all countries to promote international peace and security. We fully support the Secretary-General's proposal to create a new Department on Disarmament and Arms Regulation as a necessary addition to the Organization.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to support all moves to bring about a total ban on the production, use and sale of all types of landmines. We participated at the recent Oslo negotiations on anti-personnel landmines and welcomed the signing of the treaty.

We regret, however, that not all countries could be parties to the treaty, while understanding the reasons behind their decisions. We sincerely hope that a way can be found soon to achieve universal agreement on this crucial humanitarian issue.

As a consequence of situations of instability on our borders, we have experienced first hand the terror of landmines, and we have great sympathy for all who have undergone the suffering associated with them. We also watched with great admiration the efforts of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, to bring to the world an

awareness of the horrors of these indiscriminate tools of war. We therefore call on all Member States to support the initiatives aimed at ending for ever the threat of all types of landmines.

The Kingdom of Swaziland views with great concern the situation in the Middle East and in particular the strained relations between the Israeli and Palestinian people. The climate of reconciliation and hope inspired by the Oslo peace accord has given way to suspicion and dread. It is clear that the international community must continue to support the peace initiative as the only way forward and make every effort to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table on a basis of mutual trust and confidence.

The Kingdom of Swaziland supports the efforts of all who are trying to achieve a breakthrough in this area. We call on the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, for the sake of their own people, to find a way out of this apparent deadlock and return to the spirit of compromise which prevailed during the Oslo negotiations, and which held out the promise of lasting peace.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has been encouraged by the recent developments in Northern Ireland, with all-party talks on the future of that troubled province at last under way. We commend the determination of the British and Irish Governments to involve all stakeholders in the negotiations, and we call on all involved to make every effort to ensure that these negotiations lead to lasting peace and stability.

The continent of Africa continues to experience situations of instability and conflict which have unfortunate effects on all of us who call it our home. In the past 12 months we have seen crises in Sierra Leone, the Congo and the Comoros islands, and the continuation of problems in many areas and countries such as the Great Lakes region, the horn of Africa and Angola.The Kingdom of Swaziland prays for the many millions caught up in the violence of these and other situations of instability on our beloved continent, and continues to support efforts to find peaceful solutions.

At the same time, we welcome a number of encouraging events on the continent, in countries such as Liberia, where United Nations efforts towards peace over the years contributed significantly to the elections earlier this year.We applaud the peaceful nature of that process, and we hope and pray that lasting, sustainable peace has at last come to the Liberian people after so many years of conflict.

And we commend the appointment by the Secretary-General of Personal Envoy Mr. James Baker to oversee the situation in Western Sahara. We are most encouraged by developments in this long-running dispute, and we look forward to a lasting resolution in the near future.

In the light of continuing instability on much of our continent, one practical measure undertaken by the whole African community has been the recent initiatives by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and our own Southern African Development Community (SADC), to become better prepared to cope with our continent's crises using the resources available to maintain peace in our region. One element of this has been the training and preparation of African peacekeeping forces for deployment throughout the continent. The Kingdom of Swaziland has pledged its commitment to provide troops for such forces, once adequate training and preparation have been completed.

We should like to record our appreciation to the United States of America for its African Crisis Response Initiative, which is focusing a number of African countries, including the Kingdom of Swaziland, on the requirement for such things as standardized procedures, training and equipment. It is clearly essential for this type of peace force initiative to have the support of the international community and for the OAU to maintain close cooperation with the United Nations in our joint attempts to provide adequate policing of crisis situations in Africa.

For almost 30 years the Kingdom of Swaziland has enjoyed excellent relations with a nation which, despite an outstanding record in international development assistance, and while fulfilling all the requirements for membership of our Organization, is nonetheless excluded from participating in the activities of the United Nations. I am referring to the issue of the Government of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

In October 1971 the United Nations adopted a resolution which withdrew membership from the Republic of China. That resolution has the effect today of denying the rights of almost 22 million people to be represented here in the United Nations, and to contribute to all the global initiatives undertaken by our Organization.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has been in a position to recognize and experience at first hand the peace-loving nature of the Republic of China on Taiwan and its willingness to help foster peace and prosperity throughout the world. The Government and people of the Republic of China have made enormous advances in economic, social and political terms, and have shown themselves ready and able to share their experience and advice with all the nations of the world.

Many countries and political groupings over the years have also recognized the need to involve the Republic of China on Taiwan in global development activities, through the offices of the United Nations and its agencies. There is also a growing voice of international opinion, including in the European Parliament, the American Congress and among many countries on all five continents, that membership of the United Nations is necessary for the huge resources and wealth of expertise of the Republic of China to be put to the best possible use for the benefit of all mankind.

One of the founding and guiding principles of our Organization has been that of universality, of granting all peoples of the world the right to belong to the United Nations and to be heard in our chambers. It is a reality that almost 22 million people believe that that right is denied to them, by virtue of their country's exclusion from the activities of the one truly global development Organization. The Kingdom of Swaziland therefore proposes to its fellow Member States that the time has now come to review the resolution of 26 years ago. We believe that there is an urgent need to re-examine this issue, taking into account the profound changes in the situation that have occurred since 1971.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has viewed with concern the recent report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which highlighted once more the economic plight of the developing world. Globalization and liberalization are economic principles with which we all agree, but not at the expense of a greater concentration of wealth in the developed countries and an increase in poverty amongst the underdeveloped.

It is all very well to quote the long-term benefits of trade liberalization, but we must understand the severe short-term penalties for those countries which are least prepared to meet them. The Kingdom of Swaziland understands very well what is required of us in a world of free trade, in terms of becoming a producer of finished goods and services in a manner which will allow us to compete effectively and on an equal basis with the rest of the world. But for us to achieve the growth and standards of technology and production required, we and the rest of the developing world need the understanding and support of the developed countries in what will be very difficult economic times ahead.

To meet this economic challenge, the Kingdom of Swaziland is continuing its efforts to develop in a sustainable manner, and to create an environment in which our people can prosper. We have been following up recent national initiatives designed to address our short- and long-term social and political challenges and to enhance the right conditions to allow our private sector to continue to be the engine for growth. We have just completed our latest national development strategy, which will set out Government priorities for the next 25 years. Our own internal restructuring programme is continuing, and Government has begun a series of short-term measures to improve the economy.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a developing nation which is largely dependent on agriculture for its survival. In common with other Member States in our position, we continually find ourselves at the mercy of Mother Nature, and in particular we are dependent on adequate rainfall. Our economy is only just recovering from the devastating drought of 1991 and 1992, and now we have learned with great dismay that the dreaded El Niño is once more present in the Pacific Ocean. If true, this will have the gravest consequences for all of us in southern Africa. The Kingdom of Swaziland has learned the lessons of the last drought, and we have begun a programme of dam construction throughout the rural areas. But the threat of a renewed period of reduced rainfall has come much too soon, and we hope for the support once more of our Organization and our fellow Member States.

In addition to addressing its economic concerns, the Kingdom of Eswatini has also begun a review of the nation's Constitution. In response to the call by the Swazi people for a fundamental and far-reaching review of our existing Constitution, a Commission has been established and is in the process of conducting a constitutional education programme, reaching even to the most remote areas of the country.

This will be followed by a period of submissions from everyone in the Kingdom, after which a constitution, in accordance with the wishes of the whole nation, will be drawn up for national approval.

It will truly be the people's constitution, since the process allows the free participation of all Swazis. National participation in important matters such as these is a crucial guiding principle of the Swazi people and, over the years, has ensured the peace and stability we have always enjoyed.

We have welcomed the encouragement and support for our constitutional review process from the international community, including the United Nations Development Programme office based in the Kingdom. We are confident that, with the involvement of all Swazis, we will produce a document reflecting the wishes of the whole nation, one that will serve us well for generations to come.

There is much vital work to be done in this fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The Kingdom of Eswatini believes that our Organization is at a major crossroads in terms of its own development. We have the opportunity now to carry out the correct reforms and ensure that our Organization is equipped to face the many global challenges that lie ahead in a more efficient, accountable and open manner. We must choose our steps carefully and wisely. Those for whom we are responsible — our people — look to the United Nations to provide the global development leadership that we so desperately need. We cannot afford to fail them.

On behalf of Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and the whole Swazi nation, it is my proud duty to reaffirm the commitment of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the Charter and principles of the United Nations. May God watch over the Assembly's deliberations here in the coming months and guide it in its decisions.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Mr. Alfred Sant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

The Honourable Mr. Alfred Sant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Alfred Sant, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sant (Malta): I wish to join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I am sure that, with your vast experience and diplomatic skill, this Assembly will be guided towards achieving the goals to which all peace-loving nations aspire. I also take this occasion to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the efficient and energetic manner in which he presided over the Assembly at its fifty-first session.

As we approach the dawn of a new millennium, the international community continues to prepare itself for the new challenges that the twenty-first century will inevitably bring. Malta welcomes the commitment of our evolving United Nations, ably led by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to become more responsive to and effective in meeting these new challenges. Similarly, we share his perception that the United Nations is at a moment of great opportunity.

There should be little doubt that, with the demise of bloc politics, the way has been opened for a world more at ease with itself. Tension on a global scale has diminished. At the same time, global instability has been replaced by regional tensions that have often led to ethnic and other localized conflicts. In our interdependent world, the United Nations has a significant role to play in the promotion of understanding and cooperation, which are essential elements for the survival of humankind.

For its part, Malta is ready to work closely with all Member States to strengthen our capacity for collective action in the best interests of the States and peoples of our countries, particularly in upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Our commitment to fundamental rights and the process of democracy is unwavering.

Malta looks forward to the establishment of an international criminal court in Rome in 1998. Earlier this month, Malta was honoured to host an international conference on this initiative, which we strongly support. Our commitment to the setting up of such a court stems

from the fact that this court would be a landmark development in the creation of a balanced and effective system aimed at ensuring that international crimes, especially mass violations of basic fundamental human rights, do not remain unpunished.

We strongly believe that no country can enjoy peace and prosperity in the true sense of the word unless fundamental human rights are respected and unless the State adopts a democratic system of government. Likewise, Malta is committed to an international policy that promotes disarmament and supports all measures that militate against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Malta fully supports current efforts being undertaken to ban the production and use of anti-personnel landmines.

Eleven months to the day after a democratic change of Government in Malta, I must take this occasion to affirm our commitment to peace, to cooperation among all nations and to the pursuit of economic prosperity in a context of social justice. Placed as it is at the southern rim of Europe and at the geographic and strategic centre of the Mediterranean, Malta stands by its commitment to the ideals of European integration as well as to those of Mediterranean unity. We believe that both these sets of ideals are of vital importance, while being complementary and in the best interests of all Mediterranean and all European peoples.

In following up on these ideals, we have proposed to the Maltese nation a vision of a role for Malta that tangibly affirms the island's neutrality, in order to remove once and for all any perception that Malta could be of any threat to any of its neighbours, north or south, west or east. Within this context, our vision projects for Malta a role that, subject to our clear limitations of size and resources, actively seeks to help build political, economic, social and cultural bridges between all our neighbours and other peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean space.

Indeed, Malta's foreign policy has three important constituents. It is a foreign policy based on cooperation with neighbouring countries, free of alignments yet open and friendly to all; supported by an economic strategy based on high-quality production and the provision of high-quality services; and endeavouring to pursue excellence and reliability in all that it seeks and undertakes.

Malta's foreign policy priority is to maintain the best and most transparent relationship possible with all of our neighbours in the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond. Our active neutrality foreign policy agenda aims to deepen our ties with the European Union in a meaningful manner while implementing an active Mediterranean policy to encourage regional cooperation and unity.

Indeed, the Government of Malta aims to forge the closest possible relations with the European Union by negotiating ties in the form of a free trade area coupled with a long-term political and security cooperation agreement, and cooperation in technical, economic, financial and social affairs.

We are equally committed to build upon our Mediterranean identity and heritage by seeking to further spur intra-regional networks of cooperation. Malta strongly believes that such cooperation, based on dialogue and mutual understanding, will contribute to a peaceful Euro-Mediterranean region where Malta is ready to act as a catalyst to bring together the diverse civilizations of the Mediterranean littoral.

It is in this spirit that Malta speaks of and promotes its active neutrality. We seek and promote peace and stability in a troubled and complex region. Malta presents no threat of any nature to anyone. At the same time, Malta extends to all of its neighbours the engagement and commitment of an honest broker, an intermediary or simply a venue for dialogue and discussion, in the search for a solution to the many problems which beset them. The Government of Malta is determined to be proactive in the quest for peace, and, in this context, we are determined to enhance the trust needed to act in the best interests of all of our societies.

Malta's neutrality is indeed validated by our geostrategic position in the centre of the Mediterranean, where political uncertainties, socio-economic disparities and diverse cultural traditions all are contributing to an area that remains plagued by tension and instability. Far from being ideologically motivated, Malta's neutrality is therefore a direct response to the very specific and unique geopolitical factors that currently exist in the surrounding region.

The Government of Malta believes that its strategy of active, site-specific neutrality enables it effectively to promote stability and understanding across the Euro-Mediterranean region. Moreover, this status of neutrality will continue to serve Malta's self-interests precisely because it will also serve the best interests of the European Union member States and of our Mediterranean neighbours.

For Malta, the Mediterranean has been and continues to be an integral element in our national development programme. Malta's active participation in international and regional forums is perhaps best described as an extension of its cooperative security philosophy.

The Mediterranean is a microcosm of today's multipolar world. The region epitomizes many of the problems associated with the North-South debate. These include maritime safety, maritime pollution, illegal migration, terrorism and weapons proliferation. Malta is particularly concerned at the ever-widening demographic gap and the ever-widening economic disparities in the Mediterranean region between the affluent North and the underdeveloped South. Poverty, combined with a lack of job opportunities and deteriorating living conditions, is fueling extremist tensions throughout the Mediterranean.

Malta lies at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and therefore believes it can act as a focal point in the effort needed to attract the necessary attention and resources to tackle security challenges in the region. The Mediterranean is still dominated by areas of tension and conflict, which require our constant vigilance. Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Cyprus question, the situation in the former Yugoslavia, the sanctions against Libya, the situation in Algeria and other issues continue to create political tension, which is unfortunately escalating and therefore creating a sense of urgency in the finding of immediate and enduring solutions.

My Government thus believes that the perceived threats to stability and therefore to security in the Mediterranean are more of a political, environmental, economic, social and humanitarian nature than of a military one.

An important dimension of my Government's foreign policy is directed towards the fight against drug-related matters: illicit trafficking, money laundering and organized crime. As a transit country, Malta could easily be open to involvement in the web woven by drug traffickers. Nevertheless, Malta is more determined than ever to face up to this challenge, which is threatening the very fabric of our societies. Malta calls upon the international community for support in our efforts to eradicate this social plague.

The Government of Malta believes that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Mediterranean, established on the basis of arrangements unanimously agreed to by all the States of the region, would inevitably contribute to peace and stability in the Mediterranean. This fact was acknowledged by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), when the creation of such zones was encouraged.

The ultimate objective of Malta's Mediterranean policy is the transformation of the region into a politically stable and an economically prosperous, demilitarized and nuclear-free zone. In this respect, Malta intends to make maximum use of its contacts and available diplomatic representation at the United Nations and in other international forums to promote its political objective of the Mediterranean Sea as an area of peace and stability. Through regular diplomatic interaction with other Member States at the United Nations, as well as through a more active interchange and collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General, Malta intends to keep questions relating to the Mediterranean high on the international agenda.

Earlier this year Malta was host to the second Euro-Mediterranean Conference, at which 27 States from Europe and the Mediterranean held their second ministerial meeting in as many years to forge a Euro-Mediterranean partnership, an event which in itself has far-reaching significance. The Malta Conference reiterated that the serious and deep-seated problems of our region need to be tackled through a process of dialogue and common action, extending over a period of time and covering a whole range of interrelated issues. It is Malta's conviction that this process has generated a political commitment that will effectively contribute to the removal of the misperceptions and prejudice that still exist in the region.

In its document on foreign policy published before Malta's last general elections, held in October 1996, the Malta Labour Party stated that for the United Nations to improve its credibility and authority, it must improve its structure, its administration and its competence. Above all, it is hoped that this world Organization will develop a more efficient mechanism by which it could implement and execute its decisions more rapidly and effectively.

That is why Malta today supports the initiative of the Secretary-General in presenting his report to the General Assembly and congratulates him for what we consider to be proposals of an unprecedented and comprehensive nature.

This annual gathering provides the perfect setting for the international community to come together and

take stock of the previous 12 months and to identify, as precisely as possible, the challenges that lie ahead. We believe that three types of trans-national security challenges require our immediate attention. These are the war on drugs, environmental degradation and the eradication of poverty. Unlike the immediately visible effects of war, these three challenges cannot always be defined with sufficient clarity, although they have a potential for destruction that is equivalent to that of war. Malta sees each of these areas as a far-reaching hazard which threatens the very fabric of our economic, human and environmental habitat, leading to instability and presenting real threats to our security.

The first challenge concerns the scourge of illicit drug trafficking. Countless human lives are being ruined and wasted to satisfy the greed of a few. This is an unacceptable situation. Malta believes that the United Nations system is well placed to coordinate this fight through appropriate and effective measures. We therefore welcome the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the functions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs be consolidated into a single commission under arrangements that will fully preserve the treaty-based functions entrusted to the latter.

The second challenge we are facing on the threshold of the twenty-first century is the reconciliation of environmental concerns with development needs. The common concerns and mutual interests of the international community in promoting sustainable development, and at the same time protecting our environment, cut across national boundaries.

The problem of the environment is no less relevant to Mediterranean countries. Sound management of Malta's coastal and marine environments is of crucial importance for an island State like Malta. The pressures exerted on the Mediterranean environment as a consequence of its being an important maritime highway and a tourist destination are of particular concern. We believe that solutions to common environmental problems are best found through an integrated regional approach.

My Government is firmly committed to a proactive role in supporting regional initiatives in the Mediterranean for the conservation and sustainable management of its natural marine habitat. Malta has contributed actively to this process in the past, within the context of the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Barcelona Convention, the most recent initiative being the setting up of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development. Malta intends to strengthen its participation in that Commission as well as to contribute to the fullest extent to the Mediterranean environmental programmes within the context of the Euro-Mediterranean process.

Malta fully supports the efforts of the Organization in the promotion of environmental protection and the sustainable use of the world's natural resources to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth, and of an international trade regime free of restrictive or discriminatory practices. Together we must adopt an effective course of action for the coming years that will create the right balance between the need for human-centred and socially just development and the need to ensure the sustainability of our natural environment.

In the five years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, not much, unfortunately, has been achieved. Last June's special session made an in-depth appraisal of the progress achieved, defined future priorities and helped to raise the issue of sustainable development higher on the political agenda. We acknowledge that all of us — developed and developing, rich and poor — share a common interest in the pursuit and attainment of development, which must be sustained, equitable and integrated. In the words of the Secretary-General, development is

> "a pillar of peace, a foundation of stability, and a powerful force for preventive diplomacy and preventive action". [*Press release ECOSOC/5708*]

However, our third challenge is what I consider to be the most complex. For years, the international community has been trying to come to grips with the perennial problem faced by millions and millions of the world's population: poverty. The ever-increasing disparities between the haves and the have-nots have reached alarming proportions. The cold war and East-West division have been superseded by a post-cold-war North-South divide. Though many had predicted this development and called for a concerted effort to deal with the issue, little has been done to try to reverse this trend. Poverty still reigns supreme. Aggravated poverty, hunger and malnutrition are a paradox of our times. A fifth of the world's population, or 1.3 billion human beings, live on incomes of below a dollar a day, and over 50 per cent of the world's population have less than 5 per cent of total global income.

The United Nations system is uniquely placed to deal with such intolerable and acute problems. This Organization must dedicate more attention and more time to coordinating effective action to alleviate the suffering and the degrading environment in which billions of citizens still live. It is time to act firmly and unequivocally to halt the aggravation of this situation, which is fast becoming a latent source of political instability in the world.

Malta believes that as we enter the new millennium our Organization must become more relevant; it must become more democratic. Today's setup reflects the past. In a world where everyone is speaking about democracy, the right and the use of the veto become anachronistic. Malta is of the view that the use of the veto should be curtailed with a view to its eventual elimination. Malta is not in favour of extending the right of veto.

On the issue of the expansion of the Security Council, Malta believes that the Charter of the United Nations considers all States to be equal, and therefore it follows that though we should have a more representative Security Council that reflects today's membership of the United Nations, this can easily be achieved by increasing the number of non-permanent seats to the Council.

My Government has carefully examined the Secretary-General's report on renewing the United Nations, document A/51/950. We agree on the need for more efficiency and greater cost-effectiveness. At the same time, we feel that, as the Organization is a unique body, its tasks and successes cannot be measured solely in monetary terms.

Here, I would like to highlight two important areas of the Secretary-General's report. In paragraph 108 it is stated that when imposing sanctions the Security Council should give more consideration

> "to making these sanctions more effective in achieving the goal of modifying the behaviour of those targeted, while limiting the collateral damages. There is also a need to address the broader humanitarian and economic effects of sanctions, as well as objective criteria in their application and for their termination". [*A/51/950*]

Malta finds itself in total agreement with this statement. While supporting the use of fair sanctions, imposed appropriately and for the minimum period of time possible by the United Nations in its task of guaranteeing international peace, we feel that the decision to impose sanctions, especially those which will ultimately affect the whole population of a given country, must be justified and that they should be imposed only as a last resort.

In another area referred to by the Secretary-General in his report, Malta would like to see the Secretariat's Department of Political Affairs dedicate more time and attention to the situation in the Mediterranean region. In this context, consideration should be given to the establishment of a Mediterranean desk within that Department. The creation of such a desk would facilitate contacts and the Department would thus assume a more direct role in the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Malta's contributions in the search for peace, security and cooperation for the benefit of mankind are well recorded in the annals of the history of this Organization. Malta's initiatives on the law of the sea and climate change and the recent initiative on the new role to be given to the Trusteeship Council are witness to the esteem and dedication which Malta attaches to its role in this Organization.

Malta is a small island State. Notwithstanding this, we look upon the United Nations as the forum where countries such as ours can express their views and where the principle of the equality of States is enshrined and protected. For us, this Organization has much significance and for this reason Malta intends to support the Secretary-General in his quest for urgent reform.

The more efficient and relevant the United Nations becomes, the better our interests are served. My Government will continue to give its wholehearted support to the United Nations, its agencies and its programmes. Many of the problems and challenges which will face us in the third millennium can be overcome only through the concerted efforts of all Member States and through a better, more efficient and more effective United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Alfred Sant, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I call on His Excellency Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. We have no doubt that under your able stewardship this session will successfully address the many and complex issues confronting the Assembly and the Organization.

May I take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, and to say how proud we Malaysians are of the manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Malaysia is honoured by the opportunity given him to serve this Assembly and is deeply grateful for the support he received from Member States, the Secretariat and other members of the international community in the discharge of his duties.

I would also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who since assuming office less than nine months ago has swiftly begun to energize and revitalize this Organization through his proposals for change and reform. We wish him every success in these efforts, for which we extend our full cooperation and support.

The general debate of this Assembly is the only truly universal forum where leaders representing diverse sovereign countries and their peoples are able to articulate very freely their views, without fear or favour. Given the monopoly of international information and communication by vested interests, the value of this Assembly as a forum for the free expression of differing views by leaders representing the sovereign Member States cannot be overstated. As an annual debate which serves the purpose of bringing to the attention of the international community the priority issues of concern to sovereign Member States, it cannot be replaced.

Today, I am privileged to have the benefit of this forum to share with Members the priority issues of concern to Malaysia. Let me begin with a matter of immediate concern to us and to a number of other Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, which experienced the severe effects of the turmoil in currency and stock markets in recent weeks. Stock prices plunged while our national currencies depreciated, exacting a heavy toll on economic growth and development. The sequence of events did not take place as a result of war, conflict, natural disaster or mismanagement. It was precipitated by currency speculators - indeed, manipulators - who, driven by sheer greed, took advantage of the vulnerabilities of developing economies, especially the fragility of their nascent financial markets.

What happened in South-East Asia could, of course, occur in other parts of the world which are increasingly dependent on capital flows for economic growth. Such rampant speculation or manipulation of hedge funds in the currency and equity markets of developing countries, at a time when they are still feeling their way in a world of fierce global competition, would trigger off a defensive reflex on the part of the affected countries, thereby arousing anti-liberalization, which would be detrimental to free trade.

In an interdependent world, the currency crisis in South-East Asia warrants the prompt action of the multilateral financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the developed countries, which should assist the affected economies of East Asia in overcoming the effects of this excessive manipulation and in preventing its recurrence. Their positive response in this regard is especially important in order to maintain the developed countries' continued commitment to, and confidence in, globalization, on which so much of international free trade depends.

Threats to the well-being of States take many forms and can come from within as well as from outside. These threats, including the notion of erosion of sovereignty, have been facilitated by the advent of technology. The Secretary-General alluded to this development in his report on the work of this Organization, where he recognized that the same technological means that foster globalization and the transnational expansion of civil society also provide the infrastructure for expanding global networks of "uncivil society" - organized crime, drug-traffickers, money-launderers and terrorists.

We live in a time when it has become fashionable, in some quarters, to distinguish between the security of a State and individual security, especially in the context of developing regions of the world. The perception has been created that the concept of security of the State is somehow inimical to the rights of the individual in the developing world, and this has been highlighted in the context of human rights. The elevation of the importance of human rights in the international agenda, a most welcome development, has been exploited and politicized for narrow self-serving interests and specific political

agendas. If our interest is to heap scorn and to indulge in double standards, selectivity and mutual recrimination, the noble cause of promoting the universal value of human rights is bound to suffer. Blatant violations of human rights — whether in Bosnia and Herzegovina, occupied territories of the Arabs and Palestinians or in other parts of the world — must be condemned and prevented, and not have a blind eye turned to them, if the United Nations is to play an effective role in promoting and protecting these rights.

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998, consideration needs to be given to a review of relevant human rights documents and their applications. We must rededicate ourselves to the need for a balanced approach to all aspects of human rights — civil, political, social, economic and cultural. Selective interpretation or application of human rights will not only demean their value but, more seriously, undermine the well-being of individuals in parts of the world that are still engulfed by age-old hatreds and animosities. We should reiterate our recognition of cultural peculiarities, which is an inherent and timeless characteristic of human society. We should assert that there is no intrinsic contradiction between the rights of the individual and those of the community. Individual rights do not exist in a vacuum. Indeed, individual and community rights are not mutually exclusive; they thrive on the basis of a mutually reinforcing and balanced relationship. As one reinforces the other, there should be no artificial separation between the two by stressing the importance of one at the expense of the other.

Malaysia welcomes the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, as the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, and hopes that, together with the United Nations Secretary-General, she will be able to improve the United Nations human rights machinery and role, including the depoliticization of human rights and the timely and full implementation of the right to development.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United Nations remains, as the Secretary-General has put it,

> "the only institution that has the breadth of mandate to address the root causes of instability and conflict and to pursue in a comprehensive and integrated manner the wide array of economic, social and environmental issues impinging on development." *(A/51/950, para. 128)*

We must therefore be wary of those seeking to exploit specific issues designed to marginalize the Organization. More than 50 years after its creation, the pre-eminence of the United Nations in multilateral issues can no longer be taken for granted, despite its universal membership and broad mandates dealing with all issues of peace, security, disarmament and development.

The commitment of the United Nations to development remains its most significant role. While the Organization's forays into peacekeeping make all the headlines, it is its work in development, in terms of resources generated and the changes made in peoples' lives, that is most vital and meaningful to Member States. It has become clear that while the eradication of poverty and the enhancement of development are the responsibilities of individual States, the United Nations system has a key conceptual and promotional role to play.

The ultimate objective — to secure the development of developing countries — remains the same. We need to constantly re-examine the means by which to attain this goal. The United Nations must strongly project the need for higher levels of growth, accelerated development, and equitable geographical distribution of growth. In this context, we need to ensure that our approach to development takes into account the economic, political and technological realities of our time, especially the increasing influence of the private sector.

Regrettably, resources made available for development have declined substantially in recent years, adversely affecting the various United Nations programmes and agencies concerned. Culpability must rest with those who had promised to assist but failed to deliver. In the light of such a disappointing let-down, the United Nations should explore the possibilities for closer cooperation with other stakeholders, particularly the corporate sectors.

With their vast resources, expertise, financial clout and extensive global networking, those in the private sector should be welcomed as partners to operationalize certain aspects of sustainable development. They could, for example, provide assistance on environmentally sound technologies where Governments have left a void. The United Nations should ensure that it involves the private sector from all over the world. However, it must also

ensure that it will not be dominated by the interests of the business community, by holding the corporate actors accountable.

The United Nations must continue to be a democratic institution, accountable to all its Members. Unfortunately, this cornerstone of the Organization continues to be assailed by those still bent on the quest for geopolitical dominance. In an increasingly unipolar world it is imperative that the United Nations preserve its independence or autonomy and decide in the interests of all Member States, not just those of a particular Member State or group of States.

The process of the democratization of the United Nations is particularly important in the context of the reform of the Organization, especially that of the Security Council, which is long overdue. Malaysia supports an early resolution of the issue. Ambassador Razali Ismail, in his capacity as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and as Chairman of the high-level working group on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council, tried his best to move the process forward.

Concerted efforts must continue to be made to ensure that, since the Council's permanent members cannot be abolished, its continued existence must reflect current realities, in particular the significant role of the developing countries in international affairs. At the same time, as a matter of principle, there should be no discrimination or differentiation between the old and the new permanent members. If reform of the Council is to be truly comprehensive and consistent with the spirit and realities of our time, then we must seek to remove — or at least, as a first step, restrict — the use of the veto power. Democracy in the United Nations is a mockery if the voice of the majority is rendered meaningless by the narrow interests of a dominant few.

Malaysia believes that genuine global peace and security and the survival of mankind can only be assured in a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, remains a foremost priority of the global community, and we urge the Secretary-General to reaffirm his support — notwithstanding his preoccupation with certain aspects of proliferation issues, particularly small arms.

We are deeply concerned over the trend in some quarters to ignore the need to stop vertical proliferation. We urge the international community to expedite efforts to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, to be formalized in a nuclear weapons convention. We hope that the new and reconstituted Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation will place as high a priority on disarmament as it does on proliferation of weapons and arms regulation. For its part, like a number of other regional groups, has positively contributed to the disarmament process by bringing into force the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, which still awaits the support of the nuclear-weapon States.

While we stress the importance of non-proliferation, real progress in disarmament will only be achieved by addressing the issue in all its aspects. While nations that aspire to become nuclear Powers should disavow their intentions, the declared nuclear Powers, which are also the world's largest arms traders, should also embark on the road towards general and complete disarmament. In this regard, we laud the global initiative to ban landmines, and call on the producers of these mines to help defray demining and rehabilitation costs in the affected countries.

International peace and security continues to be threatened by the deteriorating situation in the Middle East following the waning of the peace initiative in the Middle East. Mutual distrust has replaced the synergy for peace as the *modus operandi* between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Malaysia supports the call for the immediate resumption of peace talks and affirms its support for the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination.

We urge the international community to persuade or pressure Israel to honour its part of the Oslo accords by lifting the ban on Palestinian cities and towns, and to give up its intention to build settlements in what are occupied territories. We are further alarmed by Israel's decision to build a dam in the occupied Golan Heights. We view this as a deliberate act of provocation and bad faith, and question its sincerity in seeking genuine and enduring peace with its Arab neighbours.

In the meantime, the international community should continue to provide the necessary financial support to ameliorate the plight of the Palestinians — for example, through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to which my Government has made its modest contribution over the years, in addition to our own bilateral assistance to Palestine. It is important that UNWRA be provided with

adequate resources to fully implement its programmes and activities.

We remain seriously concerned over the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Obstacles continue to impede the full implementation of the Dayton peace accord. Further, mutual mistrust and animosity among the different ethnic groups cast doubts over the future of the country. It is our fear that the withdrawal of the international forces from that country could trigger a new wave of violence and bloodshed. This fear is real, particularly since indicted war criminals, who should have been removed from the scene long ago, are still at large and exercising power and influence.

Malaysia believes that creating an environment of trust and understanding among the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a priority. The international community should make efforts to promote goodwill among the Bosnians and encourage them to live in peace and harmony. One such initiative could take the form of informal round-table conferences, participated in by Bosnians of all ethnic origins, representing the different sectors of society and professions, including academia, and participants from other countries, to discuss all issues of ethnic relations with the view to enhancing understanding and cooperation among them.

It is my hope that from this effort will emerge a sizeable group of leaders from various professions, acting as catalysts for the promotion of goodwill and cooperation among the ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Malaysia is prepared to work with like-minded countries to help realize this idea. We have to ensure that peace and stability endure in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that we contribute in the efforts towards its early reconstruction. At the same time, we must all work to bring justice back to the Balkan region by ensuring that just retribution is meted out to those who participated in some of the worst atrocities of this century.

As we approach the twenty-first century, our energies and preoccupation must centre on building and strengthening peace and prosperity. Peace and security are two sides of the same coin: peace nurtures prosperity, while prosperity reinforces peace. Peace at the national level is sustained through democracy, good governance and close collaboration between the different segments of society.

Malaysia, a multiracial and multi-religious society, which less than a month ago observed its fortieth anniversary, has been blessed with peace and prosperity. While this may partly be due to fortuitous circumstances, a lot of it has to do with an effective leadership and a people determined to improve their lot. It is fortunate that we have been able to rule the country by the process of the ballot and not the bullet, with regular free and fair elections and with the different races accommodating and sharing power on the basis of democratic principles.

By engendering social and racial harmony based on a political compact, we have been spared many of the traumas experienced by less fortunate countries and we were thus able to achieve our development goals in relative peace and tranquillity. I am happy to say that we have been able to share some of our experience in nation-building with a number of our friends in the developing world.

In spite of the many criticisms levelled at the United Nations — some of them not entirely justified — this much maligned Organization of ours has remained steadfast in its mission to serve the international community, even as its resources have been dwindling in recent years. Clearly, in an ever-changing world that is growing more complex and increasingly unipolar, the United Nations has served as a pillar of international order. Serving as the collective conscience of humanity and the arbiter of its conflicts, the Organization, despite its deficiencies, has functioned as an indispensable norm-making and institution-creating instrument of international relations.

In my view the process of United Nations bashing has gone on far too long. While the introspection that followed was inevitable and has had a sobering effect on the Organization, it is time for us to pick up the pieces and allow the Organization to get on with its mission. For this purpose, the Secretary-General has put forward a comprehensive package of reform proposals for which he must be given a lot of credit. Obviously, such a wide-ranging package by its very nature cannot please every one of the 185 Members of the Organization. The Secretary-General has attempted to put together proposals and strategies that are intended to secure the broadest support from Member States predicated on a slate of shared common goals.

Malaysia is supportive of the general thrusts of the Secretary-General's package of reform proposals. Many of the highlights of these proposals are indeed interesting and deserve our serious consideration. We support the Cabinet-style management approach that the Secretary-

General is introducing, revolving around the Senior Management Group, as well as his proposal to create the post of Deputy Secretary-General. We hope that the Deputy Secretary-General will not only assist an already overburdened Secretary-General in the management of the Secretariat, but would also have substantive responsibility in overseeing the core area of development which is dear to the hearts of developing countries.

Malaysia also welcomes the measures being taken to increase and improve coordination between United Nations Headquarters and its field operations. We also support the rationalization of the work of the Organization involving the reconstitution or amalgamation of the various departments aimed at consolidating and integrating their work so as to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. We trust that in carrying out the reorganization exercise, the Secretary-General will be guided by the need to ensure that the changes will benefit all of the Member States, particularly those in the developing world.

My delegation will take an active part in the detailed discussion of the Secretary-General's reform proposals in any format that will be agreed upon by Member States which will facilitate their implementation at an early date. In carrying out these reforms, however, we should not lose sight of the importance of the financial health of the Organization, which has been highlighted by the Secretary-General himself. The proposed revolving credit fund is a welcome measure insofar as it provides financial solvency in the short term. But it is unfair and unethical that the rest of the world is held to ransom by the few who disregard international treaties and agreements and Charter provisions for the sake of their narrow national interests. We join the Secretary-General in urging Member States to work towards the speedy resolution of the financial crisis of the United Nations by fulfilling their financial obligations towards the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dariusz Rosati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Rosati (Poland): At the outset I would like to offer my sincere congratulations upon Mr. Udovenko's election to the honourable post of President of the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-second session. The Polish delegation expresses its satisfaction that the presidency of this session has been entrusted to an eminent statesman from Ukraine, a country with which we have ties of friendship and cooperation based on common values and aspirations. The President may count on my delegation's full cooperation in the performance of his important tasks.

Please also allow me to extend expressions of appreciation and respect to Mr. Razali Ismail, a prominent representative of Malaysia, for his excellent guidance of the work of the General Assembly during its fifty-first session. I would also like to address words of the deepest respect to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for the outstanding manner in which he has demonstrated his qualities of leadership and good judgement.

Seven years since the downfall of a polarized world and less than three years away from the year 2000, we are already living in a new era. Are we, the citizens of the Earth, aware of the momentous changes and the new responsibilities which they entail? When looking at ourselves from the perspective of the Pathfinder on Mars, or of the space station Mir, do we see humanity in its entirety or, rather, spasmodic movements of an anthill, always prepared to fight over every scrap, devoid of the gift of synthesis and without ability to perceive the whole?

These are the questions which all of us, especially here in this Hall, are confronted with. The burden of responsibility of the United Nations for resisting dangers and facing challenges, for eliminating tensions and constantly building foundations for the future, has not been relieved. It has not diminished. Perhaps it weighs even heavier today than ever before.

From that moment in 1945, in San Francisco, when Arthur Rubinstein, an outstanding piano virtuoso and a great Polish patriot, proudly inaugurated the United Nations era with the notes of the Polish national anthem, until today, our Organization has given the impression of being oriented towards emergency actions rather than systematic and comprehensive work programmes. The General Assembly and the Security Council are excessively preoccupied with current issues. Nonetheless, torn apart by the global confrontation between the free world and totalitarianism, they attempted to find mechanisms of dialogue and negotiation that would protect the world from global conflict. They have fulfilled that role. No one, neither the fiercest opponents of the idea of the United Nations nor the greatest promoters of its radical modernization, can deny the United Nations achievements in maintaining world peace and security and resolving local conflicts. One has to bow to the visionary skills and political genius of the creators

of the Atlantic Charter, which provided the foundation for our Organization. Their work has stood the test of time in circumstances unforeseeable when the system was established.

Until now we have been concentrating on avoiding war. Shocked by the tragedy of the Second World War and the experience of ravages of previous wars, we have put all our energy into the creed "Never again". However, concentrating on avoiding war, the United Nations has not always been able to pay sufficient attention to building a world for people, a world of harmonious existence and balanced development. I should like to emphasize this point again and again.

The time has come to pay more attention to building a world for all people, of all races, all religions and all cultures, for people in the wealthier North and the poorer South.

An important area of international cooperation has been the effort to eliminate weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, chemical and biological. This Organization has made a significant contribution to this activity. Among the recent milestones in this domain, I should mention the enactment of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, as well as the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We also consider extremely important the ongoing work towards wider application and universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the basis for a global regime of nuclear-arms non-proliferation.

We attach particular significance to the willingness of the United States and the Russian Federation, as confirmed at the Helsinki summit this year, to continue the START negotiations, taking them to a qualitatively new stage involving the radical reduction of nuclear arsenals. We trust that the ratification of START II by the Russian Federation, upon which these negotiations are conditioned, will soon be a fact, just as we hope that our expectations with regard to the immediate ratification by Russia of the Chemical Weapons Convention will become a reality in the near future. We welcome President Clinton's decision to submit to the Senate for ratification the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as he announced from this rostrum.

Both for humanitarian reasons and for reasons of our country's security interests, we attach great importance to effective actions aimed at limiting or banning conventional weapons, including anti-personnel landmines. We welcome the momentous arrangements concerning this issue that were agreed at the recent Oslo Diplomatic Conference. We believe, however, that the consolidation and universalization of these agreements should continue to be sought persistently at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. This would guarantee participation in the negotiations of the main manufacturers and exporters, which in turn would serve to take better into account the legitimate security interests of all countries.

In this context of conventional disarmament, allow me to confess that it was with immense sadness that my delegation — just like everyone else in the world — received the news of the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, a great supporter of a ban on landmines.

We are currently starting a new and different stage in the history of the United Nations. The moment has come to pose truly fundamental questions about the future and to provide answers. Global peace is a primary value, but should we not reach beyond that? In our view, global peace is a fundamental precondition to the preservation of human dignity and the observance of human rights, to the enhancement of economic and political justice and to harmonious and sustainable development. But the time has come for the United Nations to open up more so as to meet other challenges of contemporary civilization.

United Nations agencies have already made progress in this direction. The experience they have accumulated, as well as their lasting achievements in the definite improvement of living conditions for millions of people, constitute an important starting point. In this respect, sufficient funding aimed at specific programmes is the prerequisite for success. We welcome donations and philanthropy, which are an important source of additional funding and a clear sign of public support. However, the United Nations needs a solid foundation for its activities, and regular contributions by all Members are indispensable.

The reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in his report, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", provide the basis for fundamental changes in the activities of our Organization that will allow it to serve better the needs and expectations of all the Member nations facing the challenges of the twenty-first century. It is with hope and optimism that we welcome the initiatives of the Secretary-General. We believe they will lead to improved effectiveness and better management of the United Nations system. They increase the focus on

development programmes and enhance the credibility of the Organization. They strengthen the relationship between Member States and the United Nations. Poland supports the proposed direction of the United Nations reforms. We are prepared to cooperate actively in this process, and we are vitally interested in further efforts to reinvigorate the United Nations system, including its economic and social sectors.

There is no immediate threat of a global conflict, but local conflicts might often lead to conflicts on a much greater scale. The world was not free of regional or even internal conflicts before, but either their importance and ramifications seemed less significant in the face of a threat of worldwide conflict, or they were temporarily frozen by the cold war. With the ice melting, local conflicts ignited with renewed intensity. The international community, fully aware of the threat they presented, made efforts to assist in defusing them, with varying degree of success. Understandably, the United Nations had a perception of its responsibility and took action using the means at the disposal of the Security Council. Poland supports all the efforts to institute the concept of rapid deployment in order to improve the capability of the United Nations to respond quickly to crisis situations. Our experience proves that the ability to address local conflicts should be one of the priorities in our efforts to reform the Security Council.

The basic premise for balanced enlargement and reform of the Council should be the increased effectiveness of its work in an international environment which is undergoing fundamental changes. With our experience of nearly two years of participation in the Security Council, we are inclined to conclude that the effectiveness of Security Council activities is greatly enhanced when it enjoys the full support of the respective regions represented in the United Nations. Therefore, we support the aspirations of various regional groups to additional seats in the Council if its membership is expanded. At the same time, Poland would find it necessary to increase the representation of Central and Eastern Europe in the Council by an additional member. Thus, my Government is in favour of the accession of Japan and Germany to permanent seats.

Poland is among the countries convinced of the necessity of reforming the Council to adapt it to current and future tasks. While implementing these reforms, we should take into consideration two parallel and sometimes conflicting tendencies: globalization and regionalization. The emerging concept of regional responsibility should undergo consolidation. Its burden is being carried by regional organizations engaged in resolving regional conflicts, prominent cases in point being the activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as those of the Organization of African Unity.

We believe that regional organizations should be more engaged in preventive diplomacy and maintaining peace while ensuring full compatibility with the United Nations Charter. Thus, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is contributing to the fulfillment of the basic task of the United Nations — maintaining international peace and security — through active regional cooperation in both conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as in post-conflict rehabilitation.

When Poland assumes the duties of OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 1998, it will make every effort to maintain and develop further a high standard of cooperation between that Organization and the United Nations.

In an atmosphere of global peace there is a much better chance to stand up to conflicts as old as humanity, such as religious conflicts, those between rich and poor and those between various ethnic groups.

The Polish people, with its historical experience of times of freedom and times of bondage, is gaining new experience today. As the pioneer of the 1990s breakthrough, which led to the end of a polarized world, today Poland is experiencing both joy and hardship: the joy of returning to the family of free nations and the hardship of a transformation period and the restructuring of our economy.

This year Poland has been undergoing a bitter test, fighting against a natural disaster unparalleled in centuries: the catastrophic flood in the south and west of the country. May I take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to the countries, organizations and persons of goodwill that have come to our assistance. If there is any lesson to be drawn from this horrible experience, it is that massive natural disasters are a kind of danger that we all have to learn to withstand together.

This year's flood, whose destructive force struck our country, also had a disastrous effect on our neighbors, in particular the Czech Republic and Germany. We found that such disasters can be faced much more effectively if the preventive and rescue

operations are organized on an international and, especially, a transboundary scale.

There is an old saying that a friend in need is a friend indeed. But one can also find friends in moments of success and moments of joy. Thanks to the help of our friends, and to their satisfaction, Poland crossed two great thresholds this year. It was invited to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and to the European Union. Negotiations with NATO are already under way, and those with the European Union will commence at the beginning of next year. Our readiness to shoulder responsibility and our ability to meet the requirements have been recognized. Poland is now considered a reliable and respected member of the community of democratic nations.

The outcome of our recently held parliamentary elections has confirmed that this basic orientation of our foreign policy will remain unchanged and is supported by the overwhelming majority of the Polish people.

The world is still imperfect. Millions of people are paying — with their freedom, their dignity and sometimes even their lives — the price of lack of democracy and lack of respect for human rights. There are forces that feed on ethnic antagonisms. Poverty is the fate of millions of people across vast territories. But other problems on a global scale are also visible — climate changes and diverse environmental concerns, the constantly widening gap between rich and poor and the insufficient reach of education and health care. The reforms which we undertake should increase the United Nations capability to address these important issues. Let me now elaborate on some of them.

Through deep and carefully thought-out reform, we should equip the United Nations with mechanisms capable of ensuring respect for the human rights of all the world's citizens to a greater degree than before. The United Nations evolution and reform introduce the human rights issue in quite a natural way to the Security Council agenda. We welcome this trend. There is a clear connection between international security and respect for human rights, which should be reflected in the activities of the Security Council. The events of the past few years in Africa have again dramatically confirmed the existence of such a relationship.

1998 will be a special year for human rights. Half a century ago the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a catalogue of the individual's rights and duties. However, the concept of human rights still varies from region to region. I think that on the threshold of the twenty-first century, as we emphasized in Warsaw this January when inaugurating the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is worth considering how to use this variety to build a universal concept of human rights, just as the Declaration initially assumed. At the same time, however, we oppose any attempt at the so-called revision of the Universal Declaration, which must remain a common minimal standard for all humanity.

As a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights starting on 1 January 1998, Poland confirms its willingness to continue the dialogue and cooperation with representatives of all regional groups. Observance and promotion of human rights are for all of us a great challenge at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

We also believe that closer economic cooperation with developing countries will help them overcome difficulties and actively participate in the world economy. Poland is undertaking and will continue to undertake important projects in this field. We also want to point out the important role of international institutions in providing development assistance for partners with lower levels of income. We will continue to give them our support as their tasks require and our capacity allows.

A year ago, in this General Assembly Hall, the President of Poland, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, formulated a proposal for the elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime. We were encouraged by the massive support that the Polish initiative received from the membership of this Organization. We think that the international community should take active measures to stop the spreading cancer of transnational crime. We must secure the effective cooperation of countries and organizations concerned.

We believe that the United Nations will find for itself a creative and constructive role through the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which has been entrusted with the task of elaborating this convention. Poland is ready to cooperate with other countries to extend the scope and range of the convention if such extension would meet the needs and expectations of Member States. We appreciate the work of the Commission on this subject and hope that the Assembly will receive a final draft of the convention at its next session.

Equally important are the environmental issues. The most important among them are those related to climate changes. To deal effectively with such problems as the greenhouse effect, melting of glaciers and the protection of tropical forests is a task far exceeding the ability of any single country or even region. It is hard to imagine effective action in this area unless we all join forces.

It is justifiable to reconsider whether the United Nations is an organization capable of dealing with these tasks. The doubts voiced by the skeptics should not be ignored. However, Poland is among the countries that believe that the United Nations system can, through the collective effort of its Members, meet the challenges. This effort has to be directed towards, among other things, understanding current and future dilemmas which reach beyond this century. It must be sustained with a vision, shared by all Members of the system, of the shape they wish to give to tomorrow. It must involve the will to develop an organizational system and make it effective, with each Member bearing its share of responsibility. Today's Poland — democratic, economically successful, enjoying good relations with all its neighbours, binding itself to alliances with the European Union and NATO — is ready to participate in carrying out this task.

We must rise to the expectations of the United Nations. As one of the Organization's founding Members, Poland will not cease in its support of the United Nations as a global forum for resolving problems and conflicts, and especially for ensuring a just and effective system of global governance aimed at eliminating threats to humanity. Poland stands ready to do its part for the purpose of achieving these lofty goals.

Address by Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Fatos Nano, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Nano (Albania): Let me first join all the distinguished personalities who have spoken before me from this rostrum in congratulating Mr. Udovenko on his election as President of the General Assembly for the current session and wishing him all possible success in this lofty post. I would also like to convey my high appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the excellent leadership he provided during his tenure of the previous General Assembly presidency.

May I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election to the highest post of our global Organization. We are confident that his long experience as an international civil servant and his correct assessment and proper action in implementing the United Nations reform are guarantees of the successful crowning of our efforts to have a stronger and more efficient Organization.

Before I deal with the more general questions concerning our common work and efforts in the Organization, I would like to dwell briefly on the dramatic events and developments that occurred in my country, in particular during the first half of the current year, which were also of concern to the United Nations.

The Assembly is already aware of what happened in my country, during which total chaos and anarchy reigned for months. That was perhaps the biggest crisis in our modern history. Albania has a peculiar history of chronic isolation, of almost total estrangement from the rest of the world, of great potential, human and natural wealth, while being, at the same time, underdeveloped and poor. Our difficulties of growth are directly linked to the legacies of former rules and half a century of communism, of non-existent, non-functioning or malfunctioning democratic institutions, both during and after the collapse of communism and its structures, as well as with our mentality. They are linked to flaws and shortcomings in different fields, to clear tendencies to forsake freedom, to partisan intolerance, to lack of inter-party constructive cooperation, to mismanagement and corruption, to autocratic behaviour and decisions — not rare phenomena in our part of the world.

It was the great complexity of these and other developments, coupled with the collapse of the get-rich-quick pyramid investment schemes, which led to broad popular frustration, disillusionment and general unrest and brought the whole country to the state of unprecedented chaos and anarchy I mentioned a moment ago.

In these circumstances, the international community reacted promptly, displaying a remarkable sense of responsibility, unity and solidarity amongst its members and with my people and country, one of the Members of this Organization. The involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union, the United Nations Security Council's benediction, and the well-balanced, all-out efforts and contribution of important neighbours and friends helped us to prevent further aggravation and to alleviate and gradually overcome the crisis.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend in the warmest possible terms the very serious commitment of the OSCE; its Chairman-in-Office, Minister Petersen, and his Personal Representative, former Austrian Chancellor, Mr. Vranitzky; the United Nations and its Security Council for their prompt response to this emergency situation through their relevant decisions, resolutions and concrete actions. Let me also thank most warmly all the troop-contributing States — France, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Romania, Denmark, Portugal, Austria, Belgium and Slovenia — which, under the excellent leadership and command of Italy, made the entire effort of the Multinational Protection Force a full success in the implementation of its mandate. Last but not least, I would wish to express my deep appreciation and thanks to the European Union and all the other international and regional organizations, the United States of America, as well as to other individual States, for the continuous support and assistance they have given and are giving my country. My people are indebted to them and to all here.

This highly appreciated assistance helped us start a process of reconciliation and gradual restoration of political stability in the country. It is also a reflection of historical lessons learned in today's efforts to establish a peaceful, democratic and united Europe, without walls and fully free, in which the integration processes should be comprehensive enough not to exclude any country, even the weakest, as Pope John Paul II said. This is the only road to ensuring that the universal principles which this global Organization and others stand for are permanently upheld and defended.

The successful holding of elections in Albania on 29 June, which were considered by the international community as adequate and acceptable, can and must be the foundation for a stable democratic system. They showed the strong desire of my people for a democratic future for Albania. The coalition Government which emerged from these elections is fully determined to work with a new philosophy based on cooperation and coexistence, on sharing and, at the same time, assuming responsibilities, by the majority and the minority alike. The guiding yardstick will be making maximum use of internal capacities as the best way to ensure continuation of the spirit of understanding, the process of reconciliation, constructive cooperation, economic recovery and the overall return of normalcy to the country in the shortest possible time. This is the spirit we have decided to be guided by, as personified brilliantly by the Albanian famous worldwide, Mother Teresa.

We do hope and will work to ensure that this process will bring about the necessary transformation of the country into a reliable partner that truly shares common democratic values and qualifies for its gradual but sure integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures it has the objective to achieve.

Let me inform the Assembly that our main, urgent challenge remains the restoration of public order and security in the country. Therefore, we have devoted maximum and special attention to it. Lack of public order and security cannot coexist with the development of the economy and democratic values. Intensive work is already under way on the basis of short- and long-term plans.

Special emphasis is being put on and we have started work towards the reorganization of the army, with the objective of gradually having a smaller, more efficient and professional force under strict civilian control, in conformity with all standards of modern armies, capable of performing its functions properly and of being a genuine partner in partnership activities. Various problems persist in the economic field, where we have witnessed a quasi-paralysis of life and the deterioration of all micro- and macroeconomic indices. In cooperation with and the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, we hope we will be able to deal successfully with the main economic and social priorities. We have already started work in this direction, for both the emergency situation and the mid-long-term perspective.

Albania is determined to go ahead with the democratization processes in general — the rebuilding, establishment and proper functioning of democratic institutions to ensure the true entrenchment of the rule of law in all its dimensions.

All of these issues were discussed in Rome at the preparatory meeting for the upcoming ministerial meeting

to be held in that city and the donors conference set to take place in Brussels next month. We are prepared for these meetings to begin the implementation of what we have achieved and will agree upon, in close cooperation with the relevant organizations.

On behalf of my Government, I should like to pay tribute to all of the international organizations and financial institutions, from the United Nations and its specialized agencies to the European and Euro-Atlantic bodies as well as individual countries, which have since the beginning of this process shown unstinting interest and commitment in working in their respective areas of responsibility.

The main objective of my Government's foreign policy is directly to contribute to the enhancement of peace, security and stability in our region and in Europe through a gradual integration into all relevant Euro-Atlantic structures.

Albania's past, present and future are closely linked, in a variety of ways, with those of our neighbours. Like all neighbours, we share not only common borders but also, we hope, common interests and values and a common future. This requires our full participation in the European integration processes, in a common Europe united by these values and not characterized by friction and confrontation.

Relations with neighbouring countries and peace and stability in the region are of paramount importance for us. We will continue to work constructively and openly to solve all the pending problems that involve vital national interests for Albania and represent a major concern for the international community. One such question is that of Kosovo. Inter-linked issues — good relations with neighbouring countries, peace and stability in the region, and the situation in Kosovo and its just solution — should be pursued in a complementary manner, with none of them opposing, undercutting or jeopardizing the others.

I should like to say a few words about the situation in Kosovo and how we see its future, because unless this question is dealt with properly and settled accordingly, this serious issue could continue to threaten peace and regional stability. Kosovo has been on the agenda of the international community, and in particular of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union, for years now. Unfortunately, the situation there remains the same, and we are not sure how long the status quo can be maintained. Police violence and brutality, massive repression and gross violations of human, political and national rights — which we strongly condemn — continue unabated in Kosovo. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has given no real, concrete sign of changing its attitude, despite three General Assembly resolutions, one Security Council resolution and scores of OSCE decisions and statements.

We appeal to this global Organization, to European organizations and structures, to those who made a major contribution to ending the war in Bosnia through the Dayton accords and to all those who have the power and the political will to continue to exert the necessary pressure to direct this major pending issue in the Balkans onto the path of negotiation, with proper international mediation, with a view to a just, peaceful and democratic solution acceptable to all. Perhaps a mini Dayton-type conference aimed at solving all the remaining problems of the former Yugoslavia, including and focusing on the Kosovo issue, might do the job by Europeanizing our region, a process that would have to start with a full-scale reactivation of Balkan cooperation.

The General Assembly will hopefully be able to send another message to all those concerned, in particular the people of Kosovo, that the international community continues to be deeply concerned and seized of the matter, that it supports and encourages peaceful approaches, and that it wants to see positive changes in the right direction.

My country fully supports all the efforts under way to ensure the full and unequivocal implementation of all the Dayton accords. It considers attempts to circumvent or avoid certain Dayton provisions as dangerous, with implications that could go beyond its scope. We maintain that there is no alternative to the full implementation of Dayton.

The Albanian Government is strongly committed to promoting and actively taking part in regional cooperation, knowing that democratization, market economy prosperity, good-neighbourly relations and constructive cooperation are prerequisites for the secure environment and prosperity that our region deserves, as well as for the realization of our country's aspirations to a gradual but full European integration. Our vision for our region's future is a Schengen-type approach. We believe that regional initiatives such as the Conference on European Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and initiatives of the Commonwealth of Independent

States, *inter alia*, are worthy steps that are also contributing to this end.

Albania is highly appreciative of the efforts, the assistance and the contribution of the Organization with respect to conflict resolution in various parts of the globe. We sincerely wish for peace to be established and reign in all those parts of the earth that are still being shaken by internal or other conflicts. We hope that the role and contribution of the Organization, with its reform programme fully implemented, will be further enhanced in this direction. All Member States should do their utmost to achieve this common objective. By so doing, the lead members will be able to provide better guidance through the United Nations, and all of us will work better together.

Albania is fully and unreservedly supportive of the Middle East peace process and of the intensive and ongoing efforts to bring that process back on track. Mutual confidence must somehow be restored, as it is the only alternative to ensuring continued progress in the peace negotiations. We are confident that the unsparing and concerted efforts under way will yield the awaited results.

We participated in and followed with great interest the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the environment and consider it to have made an important contribution to resolving the environmental problems affecting the earth. Similarly, Albania considers the special session on the fight against drugs and related activities, due to be held next year, as another very significant contribution to promoting and further strengthening international cooperation in this highly sensitive field.

The open debate in the Security Council last May on humanitarian crises and the protection of the civilian population was another indication that there is great concern, preparedness and political will to deal with these conflicts at an early stage, before they develop into real crises, thus playing a major preventive role. We all look forward to this. Prevention is the best medicine, because a problem can become very costly to treat and be hard to cure.

Albania has tried its best to make a modest contribution to the activities of the United Nations, including the significant fact that we are on the list of countries ready to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Our objective in future is to play an even more active role in this direction, as well as in operations of an international humanitarian character. One such objective has already been included in our platform for the reorganization and restructuring of the army.

We intend to play a more active role in the activities of main bodies of the Organization, including the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the leading bodies of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and others. Individual concerns should be treated as, and should become, the concerns of all. In addressing individual concerns, participation and contribution by all members of the community of States, each within its capacity and making available all possible resources, even if modest, will make the Organization more comprehensive and substantive, and its role genuinely more effective.

The Organization has started a process aimed at achieving the overall reform of the Organization and its system in order to make the United Nations and its role truly more effective and capable of coping with the new challenges and dynamics of the ever-changing world reality. To do so, all Members should live up to their obligations. We also feel the need for greater efforts to enhance efficiency, which would lead to an enhanced role for the Organization. Reform should not take place for reform's sake. We believe it should be our duty to define our needs in order to have reforms that are not only structural. We must ensure that money is saved not as a one-shot exercise but as a long-lasting process with its accent on transfers for the economic development of those who are most in need. We support action in this direction. We have taken very serious note of the work of the Secretary-General for United Nations reform in general, and of his proposals for the reform of the Secretariat. We appreciate his proposals and believe they represent the right approach.

The reform of the Security Council is one of the most sensitive issues and is part of the reform package. It took our Organization almost the half century of its existence to come to this point. No one can say for sure when, if at all, the Security Council will be reformed again in the future. Therefore, there might still be some work to be done in this direction, without necessarily making haste or getting caught up in endless discussions. With a clear objective, we will be able to show the maturity necessary to give the Council the right, balanced, flexible, democratic representation capable of successfully dealing with the challenges and objective of

the next century: to live in peace and harmony; to live in and leave to our children a better world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I call now on His Excellency Mr. Abel Matutes, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

Mr. Matutes (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like at the outset to make two imperative acknowledgments. The first is to congratulate Ambassador Hennadiy Udovenko on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly — and to congratulate the Assembly on the election of an insightful and experienced politician to preside over this session — which may, for many reasons, prove to be an exceptional one.

The second is addressed to the Secretary-General at this first regular session convened under his mandate. Mr. Kofi Annan is a veteran of the United Nations system, which explains how, in the short time since he took up the post of Secretary-General, he has been able to submit an important programme for the comprehensive reform of the Organization.

I wish also to state my Government's full support of the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union. Spain shares the commitment of the European Union to the reform of the Organization; it is specifically upon this matter that my statement will be focused.

When we speak of the reform of the Organization, we frequently link it with the financial crisis which the United Nations is undergoing. Yet I consider it important to differentiate the two questions and to emphasize that the reform process must not be seen solely as a remedy or factor for saving the United Nations from the financial crisis. On the one hand, the current crisis is fundamentally a crisis of payments. I shall return to this matter later on. On the other hand, the Organization's supposed "failures" reflect the limits of cooperation in the international community as it exists at present.

The crisis is, in any case, one of growth. The United Nations has to adapt and do away with the bureaucratic obstacles accumulated by the Organization during the decades of the cold war and to develop new means with which to tackle the complex situations it now faces.

The great virtue of the reform programme introduced by the Secretary-General on 16 July is that, building on the better part of the thinking of recent years, it presents a comprehensive plan to adapt all sectors of the Organization. Recent experience has shown the difficulty of implementing partial reforms. The links among the main functions entrusted to the United Nations is becoming increasingly clear: international peace and security can hardly be maintained without genuine cooperation to promote the development of the world's States and regions, and without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I should like straight away to declare Spain's agreement with this approach and to make clear the backing which my country is willing to give to the Secretary-General's programme. I will now present the views of the Spanish Government on the main aspects of the overall reform process.

I shall begin with the reform of the Security Council. This is undoubtedly one of the most significant questions facing us, and its success will determine if the Organization will be able to enhance its legitimacy and its effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security in the future. The reform of the Security Council is a most sensitive task, involving an amendment to the Charter; it must therefore be undertaken carefully, without haste and on the basis of the broadest possible agreement. It must promote greater cohesion among the Organization's Members and not create greater tension and suspicion among them. We should not forget: poorly-done reform could bring grave repercussions for the Organization, which could lead to an irreparable crisis of confidence.

An increase in the number of members of the Security Council, and particularly of permanent members, is a much more contentious issue than the improvement of the Council's working procedures. The category of permanent members of the Security Council was created in historical circumstances which no longer apply. Furthermore, the enlargement of that category could create more problems than benefits. Therefore, we consider it wisest in the present situation to limit enlargement to the category of non-permanent members.

Current proposals for enlarging the permanent membership of the Security Council introduce formulas

which tend to meet the legitimate interests of a few States, but fail to resolve serious problems raised for the vast majority of Members of the Organization, and so they cannot be positive for the United Nations as a whole.

As far as the veto is concerned, aware of the difficulty in present circumstances of achieving its elimination, we propose that it be limited to situations involving Chapter VII of the Charter. In any case, proposals for the creation of new permanent seats, with postponement of discussion as to whether those seats would or would not have the veto, are not very realistic.

The leading role acquired by the United Nations at the end of the cold war in making, maintaining and consolidating peace is without historical precedent.

Spain unreservedly supports United Nations efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security. In the last year, in addition to the Spanish contingents deployed in the International Police Task Force (IPTF) and the Stabilization Force (SFOR), forces from my country have participated in the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) demobilization process and in the multinational protection force for Albania, which, as the Prime Minister stressed just a few minutes ago, has helped to avoid a serious internal conflict. Spain was also ready to participate in the multinational force for Zaire. My Government is also studying ways of enhancing the Organization's operational readiness, particularly by increasing its rapid deployment capabilities.

While dealing with this matter, I must refer briefly to certain situations of special interest to my Government. The deterioration of the situation in the Serb Republic is a cause of special concern. We must continue to give firm backing to those in the Republic who are willing to cooperate with SFOR, the High Representative and the special envoys.

Sub-Saharan Africa also deserves special attention. Of particular concern is the serious situation which persists in the Great Lakes region and in the Republic of Congo. Spain supports the efforts under way to restore peace, as well as the holding of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Likewise, with reference to the situation in Angola, Spain joins the appeal to UNITA to comply with its international commitments and to finally allow peace to come to this country.

My Government welcomes the recent agreements reached in Houston to unblock implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for Western Sahara, and accordingly wishes to congratulate Morocco and the Polisario Front. I equally wish to congratulate the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Baker, on the efficient mediation work he has performed. My Government considers that the holding of a referendum, freely and with international guarantees, in which the Sahraqui people will exercise their right to self-determination, continues to be the only acceptable solution to this conflict. Spain, which has always supported the settlement plan, considers therefore that the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is indispensable. My Government trusts that the parties will continue to demonstrate flexibility and a constructive spirit until the referendum is held.

Spain is also following developments in the Middle East with the greatest concern. The peace process is, without a doubt, going through one of its most difficult phases. However, this dialogue is the only possible alternative. The European Union, in particular through its Special Envoy, the Spanish diplomat Miguel Angel Moratinos, is making major efforts. I should like here to reiterate the Spanish Government's commitment to this process and to restate our willingness to continue to work actively for peace and understanding among the peoples of the region.

With the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala, a process in which Spain played an active role in the verification of compliance with the accords, the way has been paved to stability, the strengthening of democratic institutions and sustainable development in Guatemala. Spain will continue to support this process, through practical measures such as multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

As I have already indicated, peacekeeping has become a multifaceted activity. In addition to military activities, it has become essential to take into account the humanitarian consequences of conflicts. In fact, the humanitarian role of the United Nations is increasingly linked to peacekeeping. Spain accordingly supports the Secretary-General's initiatives to enhance the coordination and rapid deployment capability of the United Nations humanitarian response through the establishment of the Emergency Relief Coordination Office.

Together with my Government's official humanitarian aid, I must refer here to the commitment of Spanish civil society to such humanitarian operations, and pay tribute to all the international relief workers and missionaries who, generously and at risk to their very lives, are deployed in war-devastated areas. Five Spanish relief workers and four missionaries have been killed in recent months while performing their humanitarian tasks. Spain considers that additional measures must be adopted to protect those participating in these humanitarian missions, and we intend to introduce a proposal to that end during this session.

Recent experience of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda has highlighted the need to create a judicial body to prevent impunity and to facilitate reconciliation of war-torn societies and consolidate the peace process. The creation of an international criminal court is thus a matter to which the Spanish Government attaches great importance.

Concern for the protection and promotion of human rights, which is becoming one of the Organization's principal functions, underlies all these developments. As of 10 December and throughout 1998 we will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This will be an appropriate time to assess the situation and to devise strategies which will allow us to continue to move forward in the advancement of human rights.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, the United Nations human rights programme must be integrated into the whole range of the Organization's activities. Spain supports the Secretary-General's proposal to consolidate the Centre for Human Rights and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and stresses the need to increase the human and financial resources devoted to the human rights programme.

Spain will maintain an active policy in defence of human rights and will help to ensure general respect for human rights and for democratic principles.

Another of the Organization's major functions is cooperation for development. Spain welcomes the proposals put forward in this area by the Secretary-General. In particular, I should like to stress my support for the Secretary-General's various initiatives aimed at ensuring the release of more funds for operational programmes.

The inclusion in development cooperation activities of other than purely economic factors — such as social and environmental ones — is the expression of a concept to which the United Nations has given primary attention through a number of international conferences held under its auspices. I am referring to the subject of sustainable development.

I would like to underline in this respect the importance that the Spanish Government attaches to environmental matters and our special interest in the problem of desertification, which affects Spain so directly. I wish to note in this context that my country is presenting the candidature of Murcia as headquarters of the permanent secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification. I am convinced that Murcia would be an excellent headquarters, and I therefore ask Members for their support.

The attainment of effective international cooperation in the fight against terrorism is a priority objective for my Government. The phenomenon of terrorism cannot be controlled without complete and active cooperation at all levels. The conceptual advances made in the area of extradition that have taken place within the European Union must be furthered in the United Nations. The Spanish Government participates actively in the negotiations on the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, aimed at creating an effective tool in the fight against terrorism that is acceptable to the largest possible number of countries. Spain also supports the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism and the Supplement to that Declaration adopted by the Assembly at its last session.

In this connection, I cannot fail to mention the tragic situation in Algeria, a country which is a neighbour and a friend of Spain and which has the solidarity and support of my Government in its battle against the plague of terrorism. The Algerian Government can count on Spanish backing to continue resolutely the process of political reform, in order to achieve the widest possible base of support among the population, ensure peaceful and lasting coexistence and to eradicate terrorism.

The fight against drug trafficking is also a question of the greatest importance to Spain, and it is one that undoubtedly has connections with terrorism and transnational crime. My Government therefore supports the creation in Vienna of an international crime prevention centre designed to reinforce the Organization's capacity to combat these scourges.

Spain is pleased with the decisive role played by the United Nations in disarmament and arms control. Spain welcomes the outcome of the Oslo Conference and will be signing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, while promoting discussion of this question in Geneva at the Conference on Disarmament.

The preparation of a protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention — particularly in the field of verification; the negotiation of a convention to ban fissionable material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons; and the improvement of control and transparency in conventional weapons: these are also matters of importance.

The process of decolonization has without any doubt been one of the Organization's greatest successes. It may therefore seem anachronistic to refer to this matter in a statement that deals with the reform of the United Nations and that focuses on the present and the most immediate future, rather than on the past. The reality, however, is that unresolved colonial situations unfortunately continue to exist, and our Organization still has to deal with them.

With regard to these situations, Spain is affected directly and painfully by the question of Gibraltar. The existence of this colony on our territory — the colony of a State that, like Spain, belongs, to the Atlantic Alliance and to the European Union — is an anomaly and an anachronism that we are trying to resolve within the context of the doctrine established by the United Nations. In resolution 2353 (XXII), and in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV), the General Assembly acknowledged that the colonial status of Gibraltar violates Spanish territorial integrity and that the principle of self-determination therefore does not apply. The territory of Gibraltar was an integral part of Spain, and the Spaniards who lived there were expelled when a military base was established.

Pursuant to the repeated invitations made by the United Nations to Spain and to the United Kingdom to settle this matter by negotiation, my Government is engaged in the search for a solution through the bilateral channel established in the Brussels Declaration of November 1984. The Spanish authorities have given repeated assurances that the legitimate interests of the inhabitants of Gibraltar will be respected. I very recently and publicly formulated a most generous offer whereby, following the reincorporation of Gibraltar into Spain, the current inhabitants of the colony would be allowed to retain the broad outlines of their present economic and legal situation. We believe that this offer should help us advance in the bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom.

We all agree on to the irreplaceable nature of our Organization and on the need to reform it. However, our Organization cannot prosper, nor can the reforms be put in place, if we Member States do not comply in full with our financial commitments. As the Secretary-General himself has pointed out, the Organization's present financial crisis is a payments crisis. The punctual and full payment of contributions is an international legal obligation that should be recognized by all States that respect the international rule of law. It is unacceptable that any Member State should place conditions on these payments or on the payment of arrears. Such a practice would lead eventually to the bankruptcy of the Organization we defend.

As early as 1996, the European Union introduced a proposal designed to encourage States to meet their financial obligations to the Organization and to establish a fairer scale of assessments. Spain hopes that this proposal will be carefully considered at this session.

The United Nations is the main international forum entrusted with maintaining international peace and security, with promoting development, human rights and fundamental freedoms and with ensuring cooperation between States. The indispensable nature of its role has become clear in recent years.

Finally, I would like to restate the Spanish Government's firm commitment to the purposes contained in the Charter of the United Nations and to reassert our unshakeable determination to continue to participate in the reform process in the firm belief that, together, we will be able to adapt the United Nations to the requirements of the new millennium.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, His Excellency Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson.

Mr. Asgrimsson (Iceland): May I begin by congratulating the President on his election to preside over the fifty-second session of General Assembly and pledging to him the full support of my delegation.

The new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has already put his mark on the United Nations, after less than nine months in office. He has led efforts to reform our Organization in an effective, fair and balanced manner. I congratulate him and pledge the unwavering support of my Government for his important mission.

Increasingly, as we approach the new millennium, we have come to appreciate the value of international cooperation, as most clearly demonstrated by the historic first meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)/Russia Permanent Joint Council in a ministerial session that took place here in this building today.

The information revolution is advancing, and a new sense of global neighbourhood and the gradual abolition of trade barriers are raising the level of economic well-being in different parts of the world. At the same time, the world community is faced with challenges of a new order of magnitude, making it necessary for Governments to pool their resources and work together.

Global forces are in many ways eroding the traditional boundaries between nation States. The trend calls for the strengthening of international organizations competent to tackle issues that no single State or groups of States can deal with in isolation. Consequently, it is crucial that we strengthen the United Nations. Without a reinvigorated United Nations, the international community will not be in a position to address the foremost challenges confronting the twenty-first century.

Sadly, our Organization has not been endowed to meet those challenges. Demands on the United Nations are greater than ever, and the limited resources at the Organization's disposal are grossly disproportionate to the tasks in hand. The question inevitably arises: Do we wish to give the United Nations a clear and focused mandate and empower it to carry that mandate out? In my opinion our answer should be the same as the one Winston Churchill once gave:

"Give us the tools and we will finish the job".

Once more we must urge all Member States to pay their contributions to the Organization fully and on time. The Secretary-General's reform initiative is the most comprehensive attempt to date at fashioning the United Nations of tomorrow into an instrument capable of serving the common interests of all peoples, guided by the enduring tenets of peace, human rights, the rule of law and social progress, enshrined in the Charter more than half a century ago. Coming at the end of a thorough and useful debate, the Secretary-General's report is in large part a distillation of views expressed by individual Governments.

Inevitably, the report represents a compromise, unlikely to accommodate all the wishes of a single State or group of States. But, taken as a whole, it represents the best effort to obtain what is realistically feasible under the circumstances. The reform package should, in our opinion, be accepted as an integral whole.

A focused discussion on the Secretary-General's report should give a boost to the ongoing debate among Member States on an increase in the membership of the Security Council, as well as a more equitable representation on the Council. The Nordic countries have jointly presented their ideas on this issue. Iceland welcomes the paper submitted by the Chairman of the Security Council Working Group, which is largely in line with the suggestions of the Nordic countries, and hopes that efforts to resolve this fundamental aspect of the entire reform process may be brought to a successful conclusion during the current session.

Although the reform of our Organization and its long-term credibility must have a high priority, regional conflicts continually demand our attention.

In the Middle East, the situation has rarely been more uncertain since the signing of the Oslo accords. The parties to the accords must not be distracted from pursuing the path of peace. They should refrain from creating unnecessary hurdles in the path of peace by provocative undertakings likely to cause hostility, suspicion and fear. There should be a clear and unambiguous recognition that terrorism against innocent civilians is wholly incompatible with the pursuit of peace. Both parties have to ensure that international norms in the field of human rights and humanitarian law are respected.

A troubled African continent remains at the top of the United Nations agenda. In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the Great Lakes region, the situation is worrying. The United Nations, in cooperation with regional leaders and organizations, must spare no effort to prevent the peoples of this region from further suffering.

By contrast, encouraging developments have taken place in Western Sahara, where direct talks, held under the auspices of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-

General, have greatly improved prospects for a referendum on the future of the region.

Arms control and disarmament will continue to occupy an important place in the activities of our Organization. Our most immediate goal should be in the area of conventional arms: to work for a comprehensive ban on that most terrible destroyer of the lives and limbs of innocent people, the anti-personnel landmine. The recently concluded Oslo conference on this menace has provided a welcome impetus to work towards a binding treaty. Iceland strongly urges all States to banish this inhumane weapon from their arsenals.

Human rights, which are of intrinsic value in themselves, are also a vital part of efforts to secure peace and stability in areas torn by wars and internal conflict. Next year marks the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. My Government applauds the Secretary-General's proposed streamlining of the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights, bearing witness to a strong emphasis on this crucially important aspect of our work.

Unfortunately, the human rights of women continue to be disregarded. As the Secretary-General observed in this forum earlier this week, violence against women has become the most pervasive human rights violation. The international community must work harder to correct this situation and to improve the lot of women everywhere, not least through the creation of better education and employment opportunities.

Trafficking in drugs is a peril that recognizes no national boundaries. To a greater or lesser degree, we are all affected by it. In addition to the cost in human lives and suffering, we are witness to calamities that follow in the wake of drug abuse, the spread of AIDS, prostitution and crime. Iceland welcomes United Nations efforts in the area of drug prevention and looks forward to the special session of the General Assembly on the problem of drugs next June.

Next year has been declared the International Year of the Ocean by the United Nations. The world's oceans are a crucial part of the earth's biosphere, in addition to being the single largest source of protein for mankind. This vital resource is now threatened in some regions of the world. Therefore, it is important that the Year of the Ocean be used to raise public awareness and to reinforce efforts to protect the marine ecosystem. A global, legally binding agreement should be concluded to limit the emission of persistent organic pollutants.

Problems afflicting the marine ecosystem call for greater coordination at the global level, and also in the sustainable use, conservation and management of living marine resources. At the same time, we must recognize that the primary responsibility for harvesting marine resources in a sustainable manner rests with the States that depend on such resources for survival. Also, while Governments must work with non-governmental organizations, there is a need to resist the indiscriminate pressure of unaccountable protectionist groups that wish to sever the vital link between environmental protection and economic self-interest.

Although not yet in force, the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, which provides a framework for regional cooperation in the conservation and management of these stocks, has already had a positive impact. In the North Atlantic, for instance, fisheries-management conventions are under review in order, *inter alia*, to adjust them to the provisions of this Agreement. Iceland urges Member States to ratify the Agreement.

As a new member of the Economic and Social Council, Iceland welcomed the thorough discussion on fostering an enabling environment for development during this year's substantive session. It is of grave concern that the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen. At a time of vastly expanded trade and investment in the world, the least developed countries have seen their share of world trade drop by half in two decades. Many of them are threatened with exclusion from world markets and economic marginalization.

The key elements for attaining sustainable economic development are a sound policy framework that encourages stable growth, a vigorous private sector, the strengthening of institutional and legal foundations and, last but not least, good-governance and anti-corruption measures. At the same time, we need to focus on human-development strategies. The strengthening of education and school systems and health and social services must be an integral part of any sound strategy for development.

We must mobilize the dynamic private sector, together with bilateral and multilateral official

development assistance to secure sustainable growth and poverty reduction in developing countries.

As the chairman of the Nordic and the Baltic constituency of the World Bank's Development Committee, I emphasize the important role of the World Bank Group in development cooperation. I would like to reiterate what I stated in Hong Kong earlier this week: that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative must result in a permanent solution to the unsustainable debt burden of the countries in question.

Finally, this is a time of extraordinary challenges for the United Nations and its Member States. This is why we need a vigorous, strong and confident Organization, capable of leading the way into the next century. For such an Organization to become a reality we must now focus on effective and meaningful reform. We should use the momentum and not fritter away our time in long-winded and familiar debates. Now we have an opportunity we may not have again any time soon.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.